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# Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**
**Seventy-first session**

**Summary record of the 1642nd meeting**
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 30 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

*Chair*: Ms. Leinarte

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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

*Eighth periodic report of Mauritius* (*continued*)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention** (*continued*)

*Eighth periodic report of Mauritius* (*continued*) (CEDAW/C/MUS/QPR/8 and CEDAW/C/MUS/8)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cyprus took places at the Committee table.*

*Articles 10 to 14* (*continued*)

2. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that the Criminal Code amendments that had decriminalized abortion in certain circumstances marked a considerable advance for women's reproductive rights. However, the reform should be supported by significant awareness-raising efforts if access to safe abortion without discrimination was to be guaranteed for all women. With that consideration in mind, she would like to know what efforts had been made to ensure that women were aware of the legislative changes and could access legal abortion irrespective of where they lived; whether any new health-care protocols had been established to ensure appropriate care for women seeking an abortion, including any protocols addressing the specific needs of young women under the age of 18 years old; and whether any research had been carried out to ascertain the prevalence of clandestine abortion. Disaggregated statistics on the number of terminations that had been performed in public and private health-care facilities since the legislative reform would also be appreciated.

3. Noting with concern that maternal mortality remained higher than would normally be expected in a middle-income country, at around 50 deaths per 100,000 live births, and that the rate of teenage pregnancy also remained worryingly high, she invited the State party to share details of its plans for reducing both figures. Given the alarming fact that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS had not fallen in the past decade, despite huge — and successful — efforts to eliminate mother-to-child transmission, she wondered whether the Government had assessed the efficacy of the National HIV and AIDS Action Plan in reducing infection and whether any new plan was in the pipeline.

4. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia**, referring to paragraph 83 of the State party report (CEDAW/C/MUS/8), said that she would appreciate clarification as to whether the Employment Rights Act had been revised to eliminate contradictory provisions that had enabled employers to withhold maternity benefits from women who had been in their posts for less than 12 months and to ensure that a change of employment did not result in the forfeiture of entitlements.

5. With regard to wage structures, she would like to know to which body the National Remuneration Board was accountable; whether trade unions were represented among its members; what mechanisms the Board used for negotiating with stakeholders; whether pay scales in the private sector were comparable to those applied in the public sector; and, if so, why the public sector remained so much more attractive to women workers. It would be interesting to know in that connection how the new minimum wage addressed inequalities in the private sector, especially in manufacturing, and whether any tax relief or other form of incentives were in place to encourage private sector employers to bring their policies and practices more closely into line with the principles of the Convention.

6. Wage structures in the agricultural sector were a particular source of concern. The differential rates of remuneration applied in the sugar and tea industries in particular appeared discriminatory and unjustified, confining female agricultural workers to the lower paid, lower skilled jobs in the agricultural value chain. She would appreciate an explanation as to the legal, cultural or historical factors at the root of that situation. It would also be useful to know how agricultural wages in Mauritius compared with equivalent wages globally. Lastly, she invited the delegation to provide more detail about the work of the newly formed unit set up to protect the rights of migrant workers in Mauritius, known as the Flying Squad. How many inspections did the unit make annually and why was the number of complaints recorded so low?

7. **Ms. Jeewa-Daureeawoo** (Mauritius), responding to questions asked during the previous meeting (CEDAW/C/SR.1641), said that she had visited the Agalega Islands in 2017 to take stock of existing infrastructures and services and see how they might be improved. The visit had prompted a number of measures and more would be introduced. For example, the Ministry of Education had been asked to send a secondary school teacher to the south island so that the 60 secondary students living there would no longer need to travel to the north island to attend school. There were also plans to build libraries on both islands.

8. Statistics on absenteeism revealed no significant differences between boys and girls at either the primary or secondary school level. A tendency to stay at home during the third term in order to revise for exams had however been noted among secondary school pupils — a tendency that the Ministry of Education had addressed by introducing a minimum 80 per cent attendance requirement for pupils wishing to sit exams and benefit from reduced examination fees. Teenage mothers were permitted to resume school after delivery and were offered backup support, including psychological assistance. All children on all islands had access to free education until the age of 16 years and there was no difference in quality and availability from one island to another.

9. Although there was no specific gender equality training programme for teachers, training programmes for primary and secondary teachers covered citizenship and values education and those modules had been compulsory components of the teaching diploma since 2005. A module on human rights would be offered for primary school teachers as an elective course of study as of 2019. Gender inequality in contemporary society was also addressed in a module on social institutions and social change.

10. Conscious of women's underrepresentation in tertiary education, the Tertiary Education Commission had introduced a special research support scheme for women offering financial assistance of up to $5,000 over three years. It was hoped that the scheme would bring more qualified women into active research and create role models to inspire others.

11. **Ms. Goordyal-Chittoo** (Mauritius), responding to questions about refugees and asylum seekers raised at the previous meeting by Ms. Chalal, said that it was important to note that Mauritius was not a party to any of the international instruments concerning refugees, asylum and statelessness and that it had no law providing for the award of refugee status. However, it endeavoured to process applications received on a humanitarian, case-by-case basis. The Government had never been asked to provide schooling for the children of refugees or asylum seekers but, should the need ever arise, it would ensure that the children concerned could attend school for the duration of their stay in the country.

12. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life ran campaigns to raise awareness of women's reproductive rights, including the right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, in antenatal clinics and secondary schools. Statistics showing the number of patients treated in Government hospitals due to complications following abortion could be found in paragraph 103 of the periodic report. She was not aware of any research into backstreet abortions, nor of any specific care protocols for women seeking abortions, but she would endeavour to find out if any existed. Under section 30 of the Employment Rights Act, female employees were entitled to 14 weeks' maternity leave irrespective of length of service.

13. In determining wage structures, the National Remuneration Board was guided by the principles set out in the Employment Rights Act and in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). The wage differentials found in certain sectors of activity were determined not by discriminatory criteria but by the nature of work to be performed, the skills and qualifications required, and capacity. In the sugar and tea industries, the wage differentials reflected the different tasks allocated to men and women and were reinforced by statutory limitations on the assignment of certain tasks to women.

14. **Mr. Appadoo** (Mauritius), sharing with the Committee a few figures on HIV/AIDS in Mauritius, said that the statistics revealed little change in the overall number of persons living with HIV/AIDS. Around 1 per cent of the adult population (approximately 5,400 men and 1,130 women) was infected, and drug injection was by far the main cause, accounting for 44.3 per cent of cases. Female sex workers accounted for around 15 per cent of cases. A total of 1,341 AIDS-related deaths had been recorded as of December 2017. On the positive side, treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission was now near universally accessible

to HIV-positive pregnant women — a marked advance on the 68 per cent access rate recorded in 2009 — and the transmission rate had been reduced to zero.

15. The availability of antiretroviral drugs had also improved, following the adoption of new protocols based on World Health Organization treatment guidelines. As of June 2017, just short of 5,000 persons living with HIV/AIDS were enrolled in care programmes. Of that number, almost 4,000 were receiving antiretroviral treatment. The goal was to have 90 per cent of persons living with HIV/AIDS under antiretroviral treatment programmes by 2021. Post-exposure prophylaxis treatment was also available and protocols were in place to prevent stock shortages.

16. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that the Committee would appreciate figures covering all terminations of pregnancy performed in the country, not just those that had resulted in complications. She was concerned to note an apparent disparity between the social and economic aspects of the country's development: while the economy grew, social indicators, and thus the living conditions of the poor, seemed to be falling behind. It was for that reason that she sought reassurance that the State party had sufficient internal resource redistribution mechanisms to guarantee adequate health-care services in Rodrigues Island, the Agalega Islands and other remote regions. She would also like to know whether specific health-care services, including psychological support, were available for women and girls affected by gender-based violence.

17. **Ms. Chalal** asked whether women and girls with disabilities had access to educational programmes suited to their needs and what measures have been adopted to ensure that was the case.

18. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that it was still not clear what measures were being taken to address the fact that women in the agricultural sector tended to be paid less than men. The Committee had not yet received a response to the questions concerning the effectiveness of the Flying Squad in protecting the rights of migrant workers, how the Squad handled violations of those rights and whether it kept a register of complaints filed by such workers. It was also still unclear why acts of sexual harassment were underreported and why the agency responsible for dealing with complaints was so sluggish in responding to them.

19. **Mr. Appadoo** (Mauritius) said that health-care services were extended free of charge to all members of the public through regional hospitals and dispensaries established across the country. Victims of domestic violence were given medical care and psychological and other support by social workers in hospitals. A referral mechanism had been established with the police and the health services to ensure that victims received the necessary counselling, legal advice and assistance with filing applications for protection orders from the available services of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.

20. The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Training had registered complaints, filed by migrant workers, relating to the termination of employment, underpayment of wages and other matters.

21. Children with disabilities had access to the same services as other children and also certain specific benefits, including the Basic Invalidity Pension and reimbursement of travel expenses such as bus fares for journeys by parents accompanying their children to and from school or taxi fares for students with severe disabilities. The Employees Welfare Fund offered persons with disabilities loans for assistive devices and modifications of their accommodation. Persons with disabilities had access to respite care programmes for their carers and free physiotherapy and hydrotherapy sessions. They enjoyed tax exemptions for the purchase of specially adapted vehicles. There were a number of programmes to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in sporting and artistic activities.

22. **Ms. Jeewa-Daureeawoo** (Mauritius) said that the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development was responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring that all government projects and programmes took them into account. When the current Government had been elected in 2014, it had taken steps to ensure that not only children with disabilities aged 15 and older but also those under 15 were entitled to receive the Basic Invalidity

Pension. In so doing, it had corrected an injustice that had been in place for more than 40 years.

23. **Ms. Bethel** said that, according to the common core document (HRI/CORE/MUS/2016, para. 88), the poverty line had been set at 6,200 Mauritian rupees (MUR) per household per month. According to alternative sources, however, the newly established Social Register of Mauritius employed a poverty threshold of around MUR 2,000 per month, which was too low to give an accurate reflection of poverty in Mauritius. In its opening statement to the Committee, the delegation had stated that a monthly subsistence allowance, based on a minimum threshold of MUR 9,200 per month, was made available to families of two adults and three children through the Social Register of Mauritius. In view of those conflicting figures, the Committee would be grateful if the delegation would identify the correct poverty indicator used in the State party and comment on the claim that the poverty threshold used by the Social Register of Mauritius was too low and did not accurately reflect the level of poverty in the State party.

24. The Committee would welcome further information on the programmes implemented by the National Empowerment Foundation to provide support for vulnerable women, including women heads of households, women with disabilities and Creole women living in poverty. She wished to know whether a mechanism for monitoring those programmes was in place and whether an assessment of their impact had been carried out.

25. Noting that the Poverty Observatory had been established in 2015 as a permanent mechanism for addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, she would appreciate hearing about the measures taken by the Observatory that had been most successful in empowering women economically and socially. The Committee would welcome further information on the functioning of the Marshall Plan on poverty alleviation and how it was expected to empower women. She wondered whether the Government had carried out an evaluation of the impact on poor families of the corporate social responsibility policy, in accordance with which private companies contributed to the development of the country by paying 2 per cent of their profits to social and environmental programmes.

26. She would be grateful for information, supported by statistics, on the extent to which the country's social housing homeownership programmes had provided vulnerable and middle-income women and families with affordable housing. Noting that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had urged the State party to ensure that the vulnerable population on Rodrigues Island had affordable access to a water supply and hygienic living conditions (E/C.12/MUS/CO/4, para. 26), she asked what the Government had done to follow up on that recommendation. The Committee would welcome further information on the difference between the functions of the National Women's Council and the National Women Entrepreneur Council and the ways in which they furthered women's rights and worked towards the eradication of poverty.

27. **Ms. Hofmeister** said that she wished to know what was being done to help rural women overcome isolation and inequalities in respect of access to decent wages and jobs, public transport, housing, landownership and inheritance rights under the law. She would appreciate an account of the impact that the historical status of Creole women had on their current situation and rights. The delegation might provide further information on the living conditions of Creole women and girls and describe what steps were being taken to ensure that they were fully included in all aspects of political and social life. She would appreciate it if the delegation could clarify what it meant by the term "culture of giving".

28. Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons experienced particularly high levels of discrimination. According to alternative sources, over 60 per cent of such persons had been subjected to discrimination, exclusion, hate speech or abuse in the home, at work or in the public sphere. Under the State Party's Criminal Code, homosexuality was criminalized as sodomy and bestiality and no provisions were made for same-sex marriages. In view of that situation, she asked what measures would be taken to ensure that lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons were accepted and respected and what awareness-raising activities would be carried out to change the attitudes of the public towards them. Would information on homosexuality be included in the school curriculum for children aged between 10 and 15 years?

29. **Ms. Jeewa-Daureeawoo** (Mauritius) said that it was important to ensure that economic growth was accompanied by advances in the social protection and equal treatment of vulnerable groups, including women, children and older persons. In order to achieve that goal, all the projects announced under the budget for 2018/19 had been designed to ensure that urban and rural areas would be provided with the same infrastructure and facilities. Through community centres and women's centres in rural and isolated areas, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare conducted regular information-sharing sessions with local residents. It also used ambulatory health units to provide women with information on women's rights, gender equality and measures put in place to combat domestic violence. Where the allocation of housing was concerned, account was taken of the needs of women living alone and divorced women living with children. Widows were entitled to receive a widow's pension.

30. **Mr. Appadoo** (Mauritius) said that the Social Integration and Empowerment Act (2016) had been adopted to integrate and empower persons living in poverty through the Social Register of Mauritius. Under the Act, eligible persons entered into a social contract with the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare that granted them access to social support, subsistence allowance schemes and other empowerment programmes. Under the contract, households received conditional cash transfers in exchange for ensuring that children met a certain level of school attendance or passed certain examinations, among other conditions. In order to follow up on the implementation of such measures, participating households were visited regularly by officers of the National Empowerment Foundation.

31. The National Women's Council was responsible for fostering the empowerment of women and gender equality by promoting their active participation in social, economic and political life while the National Women Entrepreneur Council provided established women entrepreneurs with training and access to trade fairs to enable them to promote their businesses.

32. **Ms. Goordyal-Chittoo** (Mauritius) said that differences in the wages earned by men and women workers in the agricultural sector should not be viewed as discriminatory as they were based on the inherent requirements of the jobs concerned and were reinforced by statutory limitations on the assignment of tasks to women.

33. The Marshall Plan on Poverty Alleviation sought to reduce poverty through subsistence allowances, support for education and the construction of new housing units. The National Corporate Social Responsibility Foundation under the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment had been set up to help vulnerable individuals and families registered with the Social Register in a number of priority areas. The Minister of Housing and Lands had established a national housing programme for 2015–2019 that provided for the construction of 10,000 new housing units for households earning less than MUR 20,000 per month. The Government had also established a grant scheme to promote the construction of housing units by low-income families who owned land. As at April 2018, some 56,000 families had benefited from that scheme

34. The Equal Opportunities Act, the Employment Rights Act and the Employment Relations Act all recognized the notion of sexual orientation. Members of the lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex community who had a grievance concerning hate speech or discrimination were guaranteed access to recourse under the Equal Opportunities Act. The Government was considering undertaking a review of the provisions on bestiality and sodomy contained in the Criminal Code.

35. **Ms. Hofmeister** said that she wished to know what was being done to ensure that women and girls with disabilities could live a life free from violence, benefit from personal care assistance and have better access to employment and inclusive schooling. She wondered what measures were being taken to provide persons with disabilities with interpreters when they appeared in court and to improve the accessibility of public buildings and transport.

36. In view of the fact that selling sex was illegal, she wondered how sex workers and prostitutes were treated by the State party. It would be interesting to learn what steps were being taken to improve the health care provided to persons with HIV/AIDS, to prevent transmission of HIV and to combat homophobia, exclusion and the stigmatization of persons

with HIV/AIDS. Lastly, she asked what was being done to ensure that women could act as agents against climate change and become involved in action plans aimed at reducing the risks associated with disasters, in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 37 (2018).

37. **Ms. Bethel** said that it was still not clear what poverty threshold was used for the Social Register of Mauritius or whether that threshold accurately reflected poverty levels in the State party. In view of the fact that, in the common core document, the State party had claimed that certain persons lacked the motivation required to empower themselves through the various opportunities and programmes made available (HRI/CORE/MUS/2016, para. 94), she asked what would be done to address the structural poverty affecting those persons and how the State party would find a way to facilitate their economic empowerment. Lastly, she asked how the Marshall Plan on Poverty Alleviation interfaced with the Poverty Observatory and whether an assessment of the impact of the corporate social responsibility policy had been carried out.

38. **Ms. Goordyal-Chittoo** (Mauritius) said that the Government was committed to implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which had been ratified in 2010. A steering committee under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development was examining ways of implementing that Convention and the concluding observations issued by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities following its meeting with the delegation of Mauritius. The Ministry was also taking steps to raise awareness of that Convention to ensure that the Government complied with its obligations.

39. Transport costs were covered or refunded for parents accompanying their children with disabilities to school and for students with severe disabilities attending courses at local universities. Other disability benefits included a carer's allowance and a disability pension, which had been extended in July 2016 to cover children under 15 years of age. Assistive devices were supplied free of charge.

40. The Social Aid Act had been amended to provide for additional, special allowances for children with high support needs. The Child Protection Act, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act and the Family Protection Act all covered persons with disabilities, while the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Act had been amended in 2012 to place emphasis on the need to educate employers on the importance of hiring persons with disabilities and of contributing to the removal of barriers and prejudices in that regard. Employers with 35 or more workers were required to ensure that persons with disabilities accounted for at least 3 per cent of their workforce. In addition, the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board had adopted a series of innovative strategic measures to raise awareness among employers and establish a network with other training institutions.

41. Corporate social responsibility was a concept whereby companies acted to balance their own economic growth with the sustainable social and environmental development of their areas of operation. A company performing highly in corporate social responsibility was one that went beyond compliance with the legal framework to pursue positive outcomes both for the local community and in terms of its environmental footprint. The Government had established a policy with the overall objective of mandating registered companies to pay 2 per cent of their book profits towards programmes that contributed to the social and environmental development of the country.

*Articles 15 and 16*

42. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that, as she understood it, Muslim couples who failed to civilly register their marriage were left in a legal void in which no court had jurisdiction in the event of a marital dispute. Many women consequently found themselves in a distressing state of vulnerability, with no recognition of their property rights. Noting that, between 1982 and 1987, the Civil Code had provided a minimum level of protection for women's rights, including by making the registration of marriage mandatory and prohibiting polygamous and child marriages, she asked why the relevant provisions were not reintroduced as an interim solution while more comprehensive personal status laws were developed.

43. She would appreciate detailed information on the situation of persons, in particular women, who were living in de facto unions, as they reportedly enjoyed no protection of their financial and property rights and received no guidance on determining child custody arrangements, while their children were generally not recognized or accorded inheritance rights. She would also welcome an indication of whether the State party would consider amending domestic provisions that allowed children aged 16 to 18 years to marry with parental consent.

44. She had been impressed, when reading the Divorce and Judicial Separation Act, by its provisions regarding a periodic payment tool that listed several criteria to be borne in mind by courts when ordering periodic payments, including future earning capacity and the number of dependants. However, under section 254 (1) of the Civil Code, the spouse considered to be at fault for a divorce was required to make maintenance payments to the other spouse, with the result that women could lose their right to periodic payments. She wished to know how the Government reconciled that provision with the Divorce and Judicial Separation Act and with the Committee's general recommendation No. 29, on article 16 of the Convention, concerning the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution.

45. She was concerned by the growing tendency within the State party's judiciary to ignore the need to protect women victims of domestic violence, especially in the context of child custody proceedings. Noting that divorce mediation was compulsory under Mauritian law, she asked whether safeguards were in place to ensure that women victims of domestic violence were not compelled to face their abusers and whether and to what extent complaints of domestic violence were taken into account when determining child custody arrangements.

46. **Ms. Goordyal-Chittoo** (Mauritius) said that many couples married under the Muslim Personal Law were also civilly married. At any rate, marriages registered with the Muslim Family Council were recognized by law, and there had always been the possibility of registering past religious marriages under section 74 of the Civil Status Act. An analysis of the jurisprudence of national courts showed that Muslim religious customary rules governing the celebration and dissolution of marriage had been recognized prior to the entry into force of the Act. It would therefore be incorrect to state that, because such rules had not yet been codified, a Muslim religious marriage that had not been civilly registered could not be legally recognized. Article 228-10 of the Civil Code established that, subject to the registration requirements laid down in the Civil Status Act, articles 228-1 to 228-9 of the Code applied to all religious marriages, including those celebrated prior to the promulgation of those articles.

47. In the past, the Supreme Court had ruled that the purpose of the reform introduced to Mauritian marriage law since 1982 had been primarily to provide for a single marriage system for all, with the exception of persons of the Muslim faith, who could opt to marry in accordance with Muslim rites. It had gone on to state that any religious marriage ceremony performed in relation to Muslims who did not wish to be governed by civil law was subject to articles 228-1 to 228-10 of the Civil Code and that a marriage was either civil — in other words, performed by a civil status officer — or religious with civil effect.

48. Section 74 of the Civil Status Act provided that parties to a religious marriage celebrated prior to the entry into force of the Act could make a joint declaration for registration, and that one of the parties could do so if the other refused, had died, or was otherwise unable to make the declaration.

49. **Ms. Jeewa-Daureeawoo** (Mauritius) said that the child of a couple in a de facto union had the same rights and obligations as a legitimate child, provided that his or her birth was declared to the Civil Status Division by both parents. If the birth was declared by the mother only, in the event of the couple separating, the mother would not be able to sue for alimony.

50. Under Mauritian law, divorce could be granted on the basis of a fault committed by one of the parties or on the grounds that the couple had been separated for more than five years. In the case of fault divorce, it was incumbent on the petitioner to prove some wrongful act by the respondent. Where there was no fault on the part of the respondent, the petitioner was presumed to be at fault and was required to provide for the respondent.

51. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that it was clear that the option of civilly registering a marriage was available. However, her understanding was that section 74 of the Civil Status Act related only to marriages celebrated before 1981. She would be interested to know the current legal implications of not civilly registering a religious marriage and whether the State party would consider introducing a law that made the civil registration of marriages mandatory. The delegation might comment on the existing possibility for the father of a child born from an unregistered religious marriage to avoid responsibility for child support payments by simply refusing to acknowledge the child as his own.

52. **Ms. Goordyal-Chittoo** (Mauritius) said that, for a Muslim marriage to have force of law, it had to be registered with the Muslim Family Council. It was not possible for the Council to know when a marriage had not been registered.

53. **The Chair**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, asked why the State party did not make the civil registration of marriages mandatory.

54. **Ms. Goordyal-Chittoo** (Mauritius) said that the question of whether to make such registration mandatory was one of policy, but that, in any case, couples always had the possibility of registering their marriage with the Muslim Family Council.

55. **Ms. Jeewa-Daureeawoo** (Mauritius) said that, in the context of divorce proceedings related to a civilly registered marriage, a finding of fault against the woman would not prevent her from requesting support payments for any children born from the marriage.

56. Pursuant to article 144 of the Civil Code, the marriageable age in Mauritius was 18 years. However, article 145 of the Code established an exception for minors aged 16 to 18 years who had the consent of their parents, of one parent exercising parental authority or, failing that, of a judge in chambers, provided that the granting of consent was deemed to be in the best interests of the child. Her personal view was that persons under 18 years of age were children and should be protected accordingly. The issue of child marriage would be addressed in the Children's Bill, the main objective of which was to ensure respect for the best interests of the child.

57. The Government acknowledged that there was still progress to be made in eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. Nevertheless, it was on the right track, despite inherent challenges and constraints. She and her delegation were keen to learn from the Committee and from the experiences of other States parties and, with that in mind, the Government was committed to continuing its close collaboration with the Committee.

*The meeting rose at 5 p.m.*